1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

lated either to cause the spirits to pass him by or to facilitate his cure. In adolescence young people discard the names with which they were born and name themselves (*oku lisapa*) according to their own choice. I have collected the explanations for about two hundred names.

The names of children are used, and that is one reason for choosing them with care, for the name will be heard often by the spirits. It is his superiors and those with whom he has respect-relationships whose names one may not pronounce. A child's name may be affected by whether there are recently deceased siblings, but he is not the reincarnation of such a one. Rather, he may reincarnate an ancestor. This is doubtless one reason for naming him after an ancestor. This, however, is a subject for treatment elsewhere.

The Period of Lying-in (Ocitete)[1]

'During lying-in the work of the mother is to cause the cord to fall from the navel of her child. On the navel she rubs castor-bean charcoal mixed with palm oil, or palm oil mixed with ashes, or with the soot from burning a sleeping-mat of reeds. A chicken feather is required from a wing or the tail, to dip it in the soot. That is done day by day until the navel is freed.' It must be noted that although a large percentage of the babies get infected navels, this does not seem to be as serious among the Ovimbundu as with us. 'For the bed of mother and baby are spread leaves that it may be soft, if possible leaves of the *ongonguila* tree. Over the leaves are spread a sleeping-mat (*esisa*) and some little cloths. During that time the mother does not sleep in the dark. The father must bring firewood and firelogs that it may be warm and light in the house, so that if the baby defecates in the night, it may be wiped properly.' No cloths or diapers are used for babies either at this period or later. An additional reason given for having a good fire in the hut is that the baby is supposed to be very much afraid of the dark.

'During those first days the women come to entertain[2] the mother and to hold the baby. Some bring meal and meat, some meal and beans, some porridge and relish, some sour beer and

[1] *Ocitete* seems to be derived from *oku teta*, to cut, in reference to the cutting of the cord.

[2] *Oku seka*, to provide for and entertain, as for a guest.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

sense, only a *potential* person. The permanency or stability of his personality (*unu*)[1] is only proven when he enters the state of adulthood at marriage. Then it is that he achieves true integration with society. Thus personality appears as a natural process of social integration.

On the other hand, the Umbundu belief in reincarnation[2] throws responsibility for determination of personality back upon the ancestral spirits (*olosuku, olosande*) or upon the Spirit World or Fate (*Kalunga*). Clearly this belief cuts across the assumption that children are born without definite character whereby the responsibility belongs to the parents. Practically the seeming contradiction seems to be resolved as follows: *potentially* a child's character may be pre-determined by the spirits, but actually or at least until the potentialities become manifest, education may play an important role by providing the spiritual forces with suitable vessels. At about eight or nine years of age the character of the reincarnation, if any, becomes manifest, but the social and psychological education is supposed to be well along by that time. Provision of the vessels and their moulding is, therefore, at the same time an active and a passive function.

The psychological and social education of early childhood and also the imparting of skills all have to do with this active moulding function as the manuscripts quoted have shown. Many folk-tales and proverbs could also be quoted to show the Umbundu ideas with regard to personality.[3]

The more passive function of providing suitable vessels for the indwelling of the spiritual forces is no less important. Even among those who have discarded or are seeking to discard the beliefs of their fathers, this side of educational theory is still important. It has greatly conditioned the outlook of the people. All observers have remarked on the considerate treatment of children by the Ovimbundu, on their recognition of personality in children and respect for it. In the narrative quoted this was seen in the mother's addressing her baby boy as 'little father'[4] and in the first visitors

[1] *Unu* lit. the quality of being a person (*omunu*). The word is used for one's dominant bent, or his character.

[2] See *supra*, p. 102, n. 4.

[3] I have identified about 100 Umbundu proverbs used in or having reference to education. About two-thirds of them deal with the period of early childhood. Their interest is about equally divided between the practical and the more philosophical aspects of life and education.

[4] See *supra*, p. 90.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

giving the baby the respectful terms of 'my wife' or 'my husband';[1] also in the comment of the narrator that 'parents recognize that it is proper to respect them (children)'[2] and in parents' reluctance to punish. It seems that this respectful treatment of children stems from belief in reincarnation, whereby a child is potentially an ancestor to be respected, deferred to, and even worshipped.

It is doubtful whether at present many children could be found who have really gone through the ceremonial for becoming media for guardian spirits of the family (*olosande*). The drift away from those observances has become a flood. Nevertheless respectful treatment of children remains, perhaps even undiminished, for it still has the force of customary behaviour if not the supernatural sanction. Indulgence on the part of the parents rarely if ever goes to the length of pampering. Belief that the child's character ultimately, or to a large extent, depends upon spiritual forces may lead parents to adopt a sort of fatalism, but that is hardly more serious than the effects of belief in the influence of heredity popularly held in the West. The Ovimbundu do not believe, as do the Zulus, for example, that a child is tainted at birth, needing radical treatment against the subsequent appearance of the taint.[3] With the Ovimbundu the development of personality is a process which *may* involve spiritual forces, but at all events requires careful human attention.

Education and Society

What then are the means by which the Ovimbundu develop the personalities of their children or mould them to the social norm? Their success indicates that they along with other 'so-called backward races have proved to be educationists . . . of no mean order'.[4] What, then, are their methods?

The educational process is the whole process of life and culture. School is society and society is school; there is no division between adult and child life. Education and life are one. This has been recognized as true for many African and other primitive societies.[5]

[1] *Supra*, p. 89.
[2] *Supra*, p. 104.
[3] See Krige, op. cit., p. 67.
[4] W. D. Hambly, *Origins of Education among Primitive Peoples* (London: Macmillan, 1926), p. 401.
[5] See the interesting analysis of M. Fortes, *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland*, p. 8 f. (Supplement to *Africa*, Oct. 1938); Margaret

A man slave might become a blacksmith or a hunter, although his work was always for his master. He was also required to fight for his master in case of war.(1) 567

RELIGION AND MAGIC

Information on Umbundu religion and magic is very slight, being practically confined to a few items collected by Hambly from his Umbundu interpreter,(2) and a more coherent article by Tucker, primarily on divination.(3) 771

THE SUPREME BEING

Suku, the Supreme Being, is thought of as the creator of mountains, rivers, sky and human beings.(4) His attributes have not been described. 776

CONCEPTS OF SPIRIT(5)

The body *(etiaba)* is thought of as having *omuenyo* (breath or life), and containing the *ocililemba* (spirit or soul). The *ocililemba* is visible in a person's shadow in the daytime, and during sleep it has adventures of its own, which it reports to the sleeper through dreams *(olonjoi)*. At death it leaves the body, but lingers nearby, accompanying the body to the interment, still in the form of a shadow. It then becomes an *ocilulu* (ghost), and may wander where it pleases. Sometimes it may be seen passing with superhuman swiftness through the village, uttering weird cries or calling pigs or chickens as the person used to do while alive. It chooses one of the households as a home, and indicates its wish to stay there by causing illness among the householders. The victim when he has learned the cause of his illness from the diviner places himself in a favourable condition to receive the spirit by performing a ceremony which includes going into a trance.(6) When this ceremony has been performed the *ocilulu* (ghost) becomes an *ondele*, which appears to be a generic name for ancestral (and other?) spirits. It is not clear from Tucker's description whether the relatives of the deceased always wait for this intimation of the wish of the *ocilulu* for a home, or whether the ceremonies may sometimes be performed immediately after death. Nor does she give any information regarding the relatives with whom the *ocilulu* usually chooses to live. She states that spirits of paternal ancestors are less feared than those of maternal ancestors, for while the former are usually satisfied with a hunt, a beer-drinking and a feast held in their honour, the latter are malignant and may "eat" children and occasionally adults also. 774 775 [787] [789]

The *ehamba* (sing. *ehamba*) "are the peaceful spirits of ancestors of long ago, who have already had the trance ceremony performed for them, and thus have a home and ... standing in the other world". (Tucker does not indicate how much time must pass before a spirit becomes a *ehamba*.(7)) 769

(1) Hambly, 1934, p.206.
(2) Op.cit., chap.IX.
(3) 1940.
(4) Hambly, op.cit., p.262.
(5) Based on Tucker, op.cit. unless otherwise stated.
(6) Tucker does not describe this ritual.
(7) It may be noted that among the Ngangela peoples to the east, the *mahamba* are the forms taken by ancestral spirits when they wish to harass their descendants. See McCulloch 1951, p.75.

769 They intimate their wishes to their descendants only through slight illness, usually asking for honour to be paid to them by a feast, or by some descendant carrying on their profession.

Osande is the spirit of the much-honoured founder of the family,(1) and is always beneficent, bringing good fortune and warning his descendants of danger. Hambly and Tucker agree that *Ekisi* is the same kind of spirit as *Osande* (although Hambly does not give *Osande* this special meaning). Tucker writes that *Ekisi* is a benevolent spirit who calls the villagers together at night, and gives them advice through a medium (?), whom he enters without the latter's going into the usual trance. *Kandundu* according to Tucker is an *ekisi* who holds the leading position among the ancestral spirits owing to his seniority. Hambly describes a shrine to *Kandundu* at Bailundu; anyone who sees the contents of the shrine is supposed to become blind. He writes that *Kandundu* is thought of as "the spirit of dreaming who makes swellings on the body", but gives no further explanation. According to Tucker *Kandundu* is an especially powerful *ondele*, and ceremonies performed for him have many distinctive features.

776 769 [778]

224 776 778 *Huvi*, the spirit of the hunt, has his own shrine and priest in the village of the (paramount?) chief. His hut is very large, since all the meat of the hunts is placed in it. In front of it dances are held, and poles are decorated with skulls and other trophies of hunting. Before the door there is a carved figure of *Samemba*, the spirit who chases the game towards the hunter. A man whose ritual name is *Kapila*, and a woman called *Kuanja*(2) are in charge of the spirit-hut of *Huvi*, and make supplication to him for success in hunting. Hunters living elsewhere but in an *ombala* or head village do not have persons bearing these ritual names, but their dogs are often called *Huvi*, *Samemba*, *Kapila* or *Kuanja*.

[553]

● 775 754 The most dreaded spirits are the *otulopokopoko*, who may be spirits of still-born babies or foetuses, mental defectives, maltreated slaves, or persons, especially children, killed by sorcery. When a person has been found guilty of killing a child by sorcery or witchcraft, he is sentenced to "restore life" to it, which he does by substituting for it a child from his own family: if the deceased child is a girl, he must give an ox as well. The child is treated with great respect by his new family. If however the parents do not ask the sorcerer or witch for restitution, the child becomes an *okalupokopoko*, and may return to "eat" other children, at the command of the sorcerer who has killed it.

RITUAL

793 613 It has been noted that the village headman acts as priest for the *oluse*, the group of paternally-related persons who form the basis of the village group, while the head of the *oluina* acts as priest for his dispersed, maternally-related group.(3) There is little detailed information on the religious duties of these priests. Cushman(4) describes the village headman as making public prayers each morning to Suku. Childs however points out(5) that it is more usual for the headman to spend a

(1) i.e. of either the *oluse* or the *oluina*. (Childs, personal communication)
(2) According to Childs, (1949, p.21) *Kuanja* is a hunting goddess.
(3) See above, p.28.
(4) 1944, p.51.
(5) Personal communication.

114 trative posts. I agree that people between Caconda and Huila
101 represent a racial mixture of the Ovimbundu and the Ovambo. The record speaks of painting-houses for girls at Cabinda, an item which agrees with reports from other sources. The jottings concerning tribes from Cabinda to the far south of Angola are too vague to be used in ethnological work with confidence.

There are many points on which the work of A. Schachtzabel should be consulted for the purpose of making comparisons with my [621] own observations. The chief of these are a note and photograph on [281] village construction (p. 130); the musical bow (p. 32); the loom [175] (plate VI); transmigration of the soul of a chief into an animal (p. 51); [524] and the game of mancala (p. 52). My observations of initiation at [881] Katoko, Ngalangi, and Cangamba agree well with that of Schachtzabel at Katoko, but I was able to obtain more detail and more [283] numerous photographs of the ritual of initiation. The spinning of cotton (p. 143) is exactly the process so frequently witnessed now at Elende. Iron-working (p. 111) appears to be comparable with the technique at Elende, but Schachtzabel seems to have missed the ritual. I was not so fortunate as this author in finding the old type of iron-smelting furnace in use.

114 The work of Statham is devoted primarily to hunting and descrip-
136 tions of plant and animal life. The chapter given to a casual description of people among whom he passed is not useful as ethnology; but the book is of service in providing a background of natural history. Information on the tsetse fly in Angola (p. 294) assists ethnological work by showing the determining effect of this biological factor. [231] Presence of the fly is prohibitive to cattle-keeping, therefore cattle are not kept along the river courses which are infested with this pest.

114 Alexander Barns made no pretence of writing more than a travel book; nevertheless he publishes photographs of ethnological value, gives useful historical summaries, and deals with economic problems of production and transportation.

114 Tucker's book "Drums in the Darkness," though written to
175 interest the American public in mission work, contains many ethnological statements. The chief of these relate to the structure of the compound (p. 37); the dress of women (p. 39); naming of twins and triplets; and other items which agree well with data from the district in which I worked. There are notes on drum signals (p. 74) and [202] cannibalism (p. 77). Apparently drum signals were in use at Bihé half a century ago. Forty years ago a slave was killed and eaten [266] at the installation ceremonies for a new king, a point that was noted

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

straight lines. The legs show the usual flexion of the knees and a shortening which is out of proportion to the body length. The lower limbs of most Angolan figures have these characteristics. The body of this figure is hollow and the head detachable. The incised headdress is imitative of the coiffure of Vachokue women. 532

Cangamba, a village in eastern Angola, is a confluence of tribal elements, namely, Vambuella, Luchazi, Babunda, and Vachokue, whose physical appearance, hairdressing, tooth mutilation, and tribal marks differ considerably. The man who sold the figurine brought it furtively. He was an Ocimbundu, but the work is of Chokue origin. The figure, I am informed, was filled with medicine, then placed near a patient who was undergoing curative treatment. 171 [755]

The figurine (*ngese*) of a woman having a number of dark feathers attached to her back has only one use. A caravan setting out for a long journey is accompanied by a medicine-man whose outfit includes such a figurine. Should the caravan leader be in doubt when choosing between two paths, the medicine-man sets up the image at the parting of the ways. He kneels before it and asks questions, then plugs his nostrils in order to make replies in a falsetto voice supposed to come from the figurine. Thus advised respecting the route to follow, the caravan continues its journey (Plate XXI, Fig. 5; p. 156). 484 778 787

The wooden figure (Plate XXI, Fig. 3) is of exceptional interest because of its connection with the blacksmith's craft, which is associated with introductory rites for apprentices. In former days a newly initiated blacksmith was expected to disappear for a period during which he killed a man. On returning to the work of his forge the blacksmith made a wooden figure of which this example, one of five obtained, is typical. The spirit of the murdered man took up its abode in the effigy and in this way helped with the work. The figure, which is of the usual dimensions, namely, 36 cm high, has the greater part of its surface covered with reddened earth (pp. 159–160). 326 775

Two figurines (Plate XXI, Figs. 1, 6) were obtained from women of the Vachokue tribe in the village of Ngongo, Ngalangi. Here the Vachokue and the Ovimbundu mingle to such an extent that customs are no doubt transferred from one culture to the other. These wooden images are used by childless women, or by women whose infants have died. The woman who sold these figures pressed them to her breasts to show the manner of use. People standing around smiled and nodded their approval. A wooden figure of this kind is substituted for a dead twin. 171 842 [845]

IX. RELIGION

Supreme Being

776 Suku is the name of the most important dead person mentioned by the Ovimbundu. Ngonga says that Suku made mountains, rivers, sky, and people. The name Suku is known all over the great territory inhabited by the Ovimbundu. I have seen at the *ombala* of Ngalangi a small house of meditation where the king retires accompanied by an old woman. This retirement for communion with spirits of the dead takes place in time of drought, and a gourd filled with water is always kept in the house. In another village of the Ngalangi region I photographed a house of meditation for the king who retires for communion with spirits whenever he is troubled (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 1). The painted marks on the door are said to be an indication to spirits that this is the king's house of meditation, but there is no reason for saying that the king communes with Suku.

The evidence regarding Suku was supplemented at Ngalangi by two Ovimbundu boys who agreed that Suku was very important. They associated Suku with rain; but the word *suku* does not mean rain, water, or food; these are expressed by *ombela*, *ovaxu*, and *okulia*, respectively. I know of no meaning of the word *suku* which might assist in explaining the attributes of this respected spirit. Names of medicine-men are remembered and used but they are not associated with the name Suku. My informants at Ngalangi said that names of kings are sometimes coupled with the name Suku.

773 At Ngalangi an informant stated that in the beginning everything was water. A man dropped from above, caused land to appear, and began hunting. At the side of a stream he saw an animal that disappeared beneath the water. He was about to shoot when he saw that the animal was a person something like himself, yet different. He took the animal home, mated with it, and reared a family. This story is told also at Cileso, about two hundred miles from Ngalangi. At Ngalangi I was informed that the first being was a calf with human attributes, who walked about on the rocks leaving mixed tracks of an animal and human kind, which may be seen to this day.

Survival after Death

775 787 There are ideas of reincarnation. Two Bailundu boys said that the lion was considered to be a powerful old man. If a lion is found dead divination is practised to discover the cause of death. If a

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FF13 Mbundu FF1a

lion visits a village an old man talks to it through the palisade. The conversation is carried on in a series of grunts, after which the lion goes away. One of my informants said that "lions and leopards are watchdogs for old men who have died." When one of these animals kills a domestic animal or a person, the assumption is that the predatory animal was sent by a deceased old man who requires a sacrifice. Ngonga of Elende said that "when a lion killed a man it was a sign that there was a bad spirit from the man's family within the lion." There is divination to find who requires a sacrifice, since some ancestor has been neglected. W. C. Bell relates an Umbundu tale of a woman who changed herself into a wild animal, but I was not able to ascertain that belief in transformation is held today (*Jour. Amer. Folk-Lore*, XXXV, p. 129).

I am unable to prove that the Ovimbundu have definite ideas of the nature of a future life, but they certainly think of survival after death, and have clear concepts of good and bad spirits who influence the fortunes of the living. There is no idea of punishment or reward, but a bad man has a bad ghost which can do evil things. Spirits will follow their relations on earth; moreover, they will come to the house of bows where their property is preserved.

A man returning from a hunt with trophies, or from the collection of honey, will leave some of these on a grave. There is no idea of spirits in rivers and trees, but the first tree felled for building the house of a man of importance must not be allowed to fall violently. This may imply a belief in a tree-spirit.

Spirits move at night only and mentioning the dead by name or whistling at night calls spirits. There are many instances of sacrifice connected with the idea of a spirit who has to be appeased. The medicine-man can induce a spirit to enter an image of wood. Thus there are wooden images containing spirits useful to the blacksmith. There is an image which can show travelers the right path when the medicine-man consults it (Plate XXI, Figs. 3, 5).

Oseande is a good spirit who will "bring good luck and do good things for the people, while *Ondele* is a bad spirit who harms the people," said Ngonga. When a person is sick, mad, or dizzy he has *Ondele*. Only a powerful *ocimbanda* can cast out *Ondele*. *Ocilulu* is the general name for a disembodied spirit, either good or bad. An *Ekisi* is an *Oseande;* apparently the terms are synonymous.

A spirit can die a second time. There is, for instance, an evil bird of the night whose name is *Esusi*. This bird is able to catch a spirit in order to make it die a second death. A living person

775 suffers sickness or misfortune if an ancestral spirit dies a second death. A person who has bad health says, "The spirit of my grandfather has been caught by *Eesuri*." The name of the good spirit *Osunde* is used by a person who is suffering. Such a one says, "I have no more *Osunde*." These instances clearly reveal a belief in the dependence of human welfare on the interest of benevolent ancestral spirits.

775 791 753 After a lapse of three months I asked Ngonga again about *Osunde* and *Ondele*. He confirmed what he had previously said, but spoke in the plural of these spirits; good spirits are called *Olosunde*, bad spirits are called *Olondele*. The medicine-man will visit a hut to foretell the future, and while there he puts a concoction in an image to which he addresses questions. He plugs his nostrils, then in a falsetto voice feigns answers from the image. The father of a family, or possibly the mother's brother, may kill an animal in front of the hut on this occasion. He then says to *Olosunde*, "We hope when [761] we kill this there will be no more sickness." The Ovimbundu are afraid of death, and they therefore sacrifice to *Olosunde*, asking that there shall be no death in the family.

775 I do not know whether the Ovimbundu distinguish multiple souls as some Negro tribes do. The part of a man which does not die is sometimes called *utima*, which is the word for heart. Dr. M. W. Ennis says that the *utima* and the *omuenyo* are both names of the spirit existing in a living body. Ngonga seems certain that every person irrespective of age, rank, and sex has a spirit, but I could find no evidence that the Ovimbundu visualize a separation 762 of ranks or sexes after death. When a man kills himself he is buried 775 near a river so that his spirit will go to the sea, and for the same reason a murdered man is buried near a river. At Ngalangi I inquired from other Ovimbundu people concerning suicide. Women who commit suicide generally do so by hanging or drowning. Men stab themselves in the heart or use a flintlock gun, the trigger of which they pull with their toes. It is feared that the spirit of a suicide will return to induce another suicide in the family, therefore there is anxiety to rid the community of these spirits.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CONDUCT

771 688 The Ovimbundu have many high standards of conduct, some of which have been mentioned in dealing with the education of children. There is, however, no idea of sin. That is to say, there are no commands laid down by some authority which is more than human.

6:Edwards E-S (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

become *inakulo* (queen) because she feared the unpleasant haunting by the spirits of former queens which is traditionally experienced by the holder of this office.[18] On one occasion Lusase himself offered to let me into the *alakalo* (the enclosure where the skulls of dead chiefs were kept) for the payment of five or ten escudos (1s. 3d. or 2s. 6d.) although the entry of anybody except the chief and possibly certain of his courtiers appears traditionally to have been forbidden under the penalty of death sent by the spirits. Even the surviving rites are confined to the chief's village; the first-fruits ceremony in which the whole chiefdom was involved disappeared a number of years ago. The association general in Umbundu country between the chiefs and paganism does not provide an added ritual sanction to the chief's power, but rather links him with what is felt to be a dying past, essentially unimportant, at the present day.

The chief may also have some of his time occupied with hearing cases. A good many minor disputes are solved by local adjudication, but there seems to be no specific division between cases that ought to come to the chief and those which can be arbitrated by somebody else. Elders from outside a chiefdom may be invited to adjudicate on a particular case. The old formality of legal procedure has largely disappeared, probably because all disputes at a local level can be carried to the post—hence any ruling by chief or elders is essentially dependent on its acceptance by the disputants.

Accusations of sorcery are rather different from other cases since the post does not believe them, although such an accusation is not in itself punishable. Sometimes suspected sorcerers are accused at the post of 'poisoning'.[19] Lusase told me that convicted sorcerers were fined a chicken, a goat and a pig. Gregorio, the chief of Menga, at first said, when I asked about this, that it was not possible to know who was a sorcerer. When, rather to his surprise, I mentioned the traditional basket test, he agreed and explained that people convicted by this test were sent as labourers to the post to satisfy whatever demand was being made for workers.

[18] Informants. See also Hastings, p. 49.

[19] Childs, p. 58.